www.historymarg.com

INDIA'S JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

MARGARET W. FISHER*

The Western world, whether because of the enigmatic complexities of the late Indian Prime Minister's personality or the immense and confusing welter of words written and spoken by and about him, has not found him easy to evaluate. The old Cold War question—whose side is he on?—could be concisely answered: India's! But the problem remained of fitting Jawaharlal Nehru—with his dreams, fears, and plans concerning India—within any of the familiar categories into which other national leaders could be accommodated. What did India mean to him? What did he retain of his Gandhian legacy? What was the inner meaning for him of that always hard-to-pin-down concept, socialism? No intellectual history of Nehru has yet been attempted. Here the attempt will be less to explain Jawaharlal Nehru, the man, than to place in perspective certain significant influences which helped mould him as a leader and invite attention to some of his own ideas of leadership, a subject to which he gave considerable thought.

Jawaharlal Nehru was born in Allahabad on 14 November 1889 into a Kashmiri Brahman family which had only recently settled there. His family, which had been connected with the Mogul Court at Delhi since the early 18th century, had lost everything in the Delhi holocaust of 1857–58. It had fallen to Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal's father, to rebuild the family fortunes. Two years before Jawaharlal was born, Motilal, as a 26-year-old fledgling lawyer, had had to take over responsibility for the support of a much loved elder brother's widow and seven children. By driving himself relentlessly, Motilal, by the time Jawaharlal was five, had established a lucrative law practice which had few rivals in Allahabad.

Death had also taken Motilal's first wife and baby son, and another infant son born to his second wife, Jawaharlal's mother.[1] Young Jawaharlal, understandably, was kept at home where he was educated by an English governess and private tutors. His cousins, being much older, excluded him from their activities. He was ten when a sister (now Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit) was born, and nearly eighteen at the birth of his other sister (now

* © Margaret W. Fisher 1967.

[1] W. R. Crocker mentions a strain of Rhesus negative blood. *Nehru: A Contemporary's Estimate* (New York: Oxford, 1966), p. 62.

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

Mrs. Raja Hutheesing). Thus, despite the houseful of people, Jawaharlal was to remember his childhood as lonely.

By all accounts, theirs was a lively household, full of both laughter and tension. Motilal worked hard, entertained lavishly, and gave vent to explosive rages when things went wrong. Jawaharlal's mother and aunts kept to the old ways, but otherwise the household was "modern." The strong-willed, self-reliant Motilal had successfully rebelled against caste restrictions, winning the battle for the younger Kashmiri Brahmans as well. His robust agnosticism impressed on Jawaharlal's mind very early that religion was somehow unmanly—something to be relegated to the women's domain. The Nehrus observed no dietary restrictions, and interdining was taken for granted. Motilal freely entertained English and Muslim friends. No Hindu-Muslim problem darkened Jawaharlal's youth, nor could the emotional depth of Hindu-Muslim tension in India seem real to him.

The tensions of which the growing child was aware were with the British. He heard much angry comment—especially from his older cousins—about British arrogance and the duty of Indians not to put up with it. But Jawaharlal liked and admired Motilal's English friends. He felt growing resentment against alien rule as such, but not against individuals. The Russo-Japanese War excited him, arousing deep nationalistic emotions. He pictured himself, sword in hand, playing a valiant role in winning India's freedom.

When Jawaharlal was fifteen, his father, wanting him to have the best possible education, decided to send him to England. Until then, a resident European tutor with a taste for theosophy had been his strongest educational influence. At age thirteen he had been initiated into the Theosophical Society by Mrs. Annie Besant herself. He had enjoyed feeling "one of the elect" and looked down on his father as lacking in spiritual qualities. Once in England, his interest in theosophy soon disappeared.

Between 1905 and 1912, Jawaharlal spent seven years abroad—two at Harrow, three at Cambridge, and two at the Inner Temple. Harrow disciplined him and firmly inculcated in this boy with the lonely childhood the supreme value of loyalty to comrades. His study of Garibaldi and of the French and American revolutions injected new content into his dreams of freeing India. He soon came to feel intellectually superior to his schoolmates and considerably more mature politically. At Cambridge he took the Natural Science Tripos, which gave him a life-long confidence in his "scientific mind" without fully engaging his intellect. (He received only second class honors.) Cambridge gave him sophistication and an enthusiasm for Fabian socialism.

After Cambridge, Jawaharlal, whose tastes leaned toward literature and philosophy, wanted to go to Oxford. Motilal, however, wanted to retire and turn his law practice over to his son. Jawaharlal, under protest, joined the Inner Temple. Again, his studies did not really engage him. He passed his

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

examinations and was called to the Bar, but his interests lay in sampling London life. He developed expensive habits and had a fling as man-about-town in company with old friends from Harrow.

On his return to Allahabad, readjustment was far from easy. His protracted and excessively sheltered childhood, followed by the training England provides for her ruling class, was poor preparation for the seamier sides of Indian life. It was to be another seven years before Jawaharlal found a course of action which could satisfy him. During this period he married and his daughter, Indira, was born. His home life was not unhappy, but was decidedly lacking in zest. Motilal's law practice was based largely on inheritance disputes. Although Jawaharlal applied himself dutifully to the mastery of the relevant legislation, he found his court cases sordid, his social life dull, his intellectual life all but non-existent, and existence itself "pointless and futile." Before his years as his father's "junior" were over, he was more than ready to abandon the practice of law. The most significant result of the entire experience may well have been a lasting disdain for the ethics of the propertied classes. Jawaharlal, at loose ends, sampled available activities, but found them all wanting. His dreams of liberating Indian were not forgotten, but he could see no satisfactory way to translate them into action.

Then came 1919 and Gandhi. Indian leaders, who had deferred demands for political concessions until the war's end, had looked to Britain for generous treatment once peace had come. The Rowlatt Bills, framed to meet the threat of Comintern activities affecting India, thus hit Indians with the emotional impact of unexpected, base betrayal. Gandhi, whose expectations had been especially high, responded with the formation of a Satyagraha Sabha whose members were pledged to disobey the provisions of this new legislation, courting jail sentences openly and deliberately—but non-violently.

To Jawaharlal, the idea of a Satyagraha Sabha brought "tremendous relief." He had craved action, and here was a method of action which was "straight and open" and yet gave promise of being effective. He became "afire with enthusiasm" and wanted to join at once. Motilal, appalled, put his foot down. After bitter quarreling, Gandhi was asked to intervene. He visited Allahabad, refused to accept Jawaharlal's pledge, and effected a reconciliation between father and son. The Satyagraha campaign was in any event called off not long thereafter since it had erupted into violence.

Gandhi and both Nehrus worked together in connection with the investigation by the Indian National Congress into the Amritsar tragedy of April 1919. Savage British repression in the Punjab lacerated Indian sensibilities throughout the country, but what made of this affair a real turning point in British-Indian relations was London's failure to repudiate in ringing terms what had taken place, thus fatally weakening the moral authority which alone had made British claims to rule India tolerable. By contrast, Gandhi's

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

high moral standards had enhanced his prestige. Jawaharlal threw himself eagerly into a new way of life, relishing above all the opportunity it afforded to serve a cause and live at a high pitch of intensity.

Those Congress Party leaders who from 1919 on increasingly clustered about Gandhi had varied backgrounds and interests, but held certain shared values. They all placed a high value on courage and were open to moral suasion. Their goal was Swaraj (self-government), but for some years its content was left undefined. Non-violent action appealed to them, but some made non-violence a creed and others—including Jawaharlal—only a tactic. Hindu-Muslim harmony, the elimination of untouchability, and the improvement of village life were goals they all accepted. Where each placed his major emphasis was an individual matter. There was room for wide differences of opinion within the bounds of their general agreement, and precisely because they were highly moral, they tended to cling to their convictions with tenacity. They were well aware that the principal bond which held them together was faith in Gandhi's political leadership. Jawaharlal Nehru was younger than most of those in the inner circle and was set apart in other ways. Most conspicuous, perhaps, were his affluent background, westernized ways, intensity, lack of practical experience, and predilection for theoretical frames of reference.

The theories which attracted Jawaharlal varied over the years. One of the earliest of his published speeches shows, among others, the influence of Meredith Townsend's *Asia and Europe*.[2] This work had opened his eyes to the precariousness of the British hold on India, and had suggested that British dominance, being morally strong but militarily inadequate, could readily be overthrown if the Indian people could overcome their moral inferiority and withdraw their cooperation. Major points made by the 33-year-old Nehru in his early speech included his faith that non-violent non-cooperation would be the salvation of the entire world; that Indian non-cooperation would mean the collapse of British rule—"that follows automatically and requires no proof." Like Gandhi, he carefully distinguished non-violence from cowardice, but he also confessed admiration for "reckless courage" and refused to condemn violence provided it was "open and above-board and straight-forward." Bolshevism and Fascism were "waves of the West" and much alike, respresenting "different phases of insensate violence and intolerance": India's choice lay between Lenin and Mussolini on the one side and Gandhi on the other, with Gandhi clearly representing India's "soul." "Courage and a will to suffer" would ensure political freedom. His fear was that after freedom, India, instead of "a shining example to the rest of the world," might become only "a cheap and

[2] See Lord [Richard Austen] Butler, *Jawaharlal Nehru: The Struggle for Independence,* The First J. Nehru Memorial Lecture, 1966 (Cambridge University Press, 1966) for a charming account of the author's discussion of this book with Nehru. (Both were familiar with the 1905 edition.)

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

inefficient replica of the countries of the West."[3] Many of Nehru's opinions would change, but this shining vision—and attendant anxiety—would long remain.

The 1920's were for Jawaharlal Nehru a learning period. He overcame nervousness in addressing crowds. He saw for the first time what peasant poverty was like, and it made his blood "freeze" and "boil." He learned to suspend his own judgment and accept Gandhi as a tactical "magician." He served jail sentences, gaining through one of them first-hand knowledge of the autocratic nature of Indian princely states. He spent two years as president of Allahabad municipality. He held political office as secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. Yet, despite these activities, Gandhi characterized him as one of "the loneliest young men of my acquaintance in India."[4]

In the later 'twenties, a European tour undertaken primarily for his wife's health enabled Nehru to talk with prominent intellectuals and labor leaders in many European cities. He attended as an accredited representative the Comintern-sponsored Congress of Oppressed Nationalities (Brussels, February 1927) and the subsequent meetings of the League Against Imperialism. In the fall of 1927, the Nehrus visited Moscow for the tenth anniversary celebrations. Jawaharlal was to say later that seeing the Soviet Union had kept him from becoming a Communist. He was sympathetic toward Russian efforts but convinced that not Soviet but Gandhian methods offered India the best route to the socialist society which was always to remain his goal.

A consciousness of being morally right and riding the wave of the future gave the comparatively youthful Jawaharlal—then just turned 38—an ebullience which caused the Madras (1927) session of the Congress to declare 'complete national independence' as its goal—a prerequisite to the socialism for which he knew the Congress was not yet ready. He made it his mission both to educate his Congress colleagues and to cultivate the more radical youth and labor groups in an effort to narrow the gulf between these groups and the Congress. He plunged with abandon into his two-fold task, becoming so much in demand as a speaker that by year's end (1928) he found himself the presiding officer of a series of organizations simultaneously, as well as the most outspoken critic of the policies advocated by Motilal Nehru, then Congress President. Watchful eyes followed his activities from several angles of vision. British authorities, Indian Communist leaders, and the older Congress leaders were dubious. Soon the British were to arrest him, the Communists to "expose" him, and the League Against Imperialism to expel him. He remained a hero to the younger men, including those who had lost faith in Gandhi.

[3] Speech delivered 13 October 1923. See Jagat S. Bright (ed.), *Before and After Independence* (New Delhi: 1950).

[4] In a letter to Motilal Nehru, 2 September 1924. B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus: Motilal and Jawaharlal* (New York: John Day, 1963), p. 247.

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

For the Congress, 1930 was to be a year of decision. A three-way split was threatened over the Congress ultimatum on dominion status—now expiring. Gandhi, who had in mind a limited Satyagraha campaign, feared the young extremists might break away. He had turned to Jawaharlal as the man to hold the party together, withdrawing in his favor from the presidency to which he had been nominated. Jawaharlal found the circumstances of his election somewhat humiliating, but responded to Gandhi's plea. Under Jawaharlal as President, the Congress declared for independence and civil disobedience, but left the details of the campaign to Gandhi. When Gandhi chose to march to the sea to break the salt laws, Nehru and many other colleagues were "bewildered" both by his choice of issue and the reforms—far short of independence—with which he associated his campaign. The Salt March, however, was a magnificent success, later to be recalled by Nehru as the high-water mark of his association with Gandhi. It also set a pattern which was to recur: Nehru, placed in a dilemma between head and heart, would resolve it in favor of party unity, thereby placing himself in a more or less false position, never quite prepared for subsequent developments. In 1930, the negative feelings were soon forgotten in a joyous consciousness of engaging in ethically unimpeachable, effective political action. The satisfactions were never thereafter to be equally unalloyed.

The Salt Satyagraha swept the Congress leaders back into jail. Nehru, who always used jail terms for intensive reading, read Marx and Lenin for the first time. The idea that laws governing history could be deduced greatly excited him. He accepted the equation of imperialism with capitalism and later took the further leap of equating it with fascism. As he attempted to interpret events by this new framework, the spectre of a forthcoming descent into fascism persistently oppressed him. His goal shifted subtly from achieving independence by getting rid of the British, to freeing India of capitalism to escape the doom of fascism.

The 'thirties were a stressful period for Nehru. Not only did death take his father (1931), his wife (1936), and his mother (1938), but he fell out of step with all organized groups in India. Gandhi and Nehru each had a vision of India's future. Each was confident of being in the right, and equally confident, initially, that the other, being intelligent, would in time be forced to agree. Gandhi did read Marx, but remained unimpressed. Class conflict was abhorrent to him. He had already had some success in persuading the wealthy to consider their riches as being held in trust for the benefit of the unfortunate. He wanted to free the peasant from fear as well as from want by making him self-sufficient in food and clothing. On this basis, he claimed that he, too, was a socialist. He continued to oppose industrialization, which he saw as the real source of the evils attributed to capitalism.

Nehru's ideal society was to be industrialized, with "political and economic freedom for all" and with the "acquisitive instinct" held firmly under government restraint. He came to accept much of Gandhi's plans for the

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

peasants as useful, at least during a transition period, and compatible with industrialization under socialism. But what kept Nehru close to Gandhi, other than the strong personal bond of mutual attachment, was the lure of his splendid, uniquely Indian means of achieving independence. When Gandhi refused to use this method or—for what seemed to Nehru irrelevant reasons—called off a campaign once begun, he fell into profound despair. At such times he found comfort in the thought of the Soviet Union as a bulwark against fascism. He was interested in the success of all socialist efforts, but certain that he had a loftier vision for India. Only Gandhi's leadership could bring his vision into being. He gave encouragement to the socialists, but held aloof from their party.

In 1935–36, Nehru spent about six months in Europe with his wife during her terminal illness. Leaving his daughter in England to complete her education, he returned to India in March 1936, more alone than ever. He plunged at once into a crowded life as Congress President, "reigning, but not yet ruling," as Gandhi, the real ruler, reminded him. Gandhi, approaching 67, had decided to groom Nehru—twenty years younger—as his successor. Gandhi was attracted by his fine character and active temperament, his fearlessness and high sense of honor. He was patient with Nehru's explosive temper, realizing that once the explosion was over, he became amenable to a constructive solution. Behind the extreme language in which Nehru presented his ideas, Gandhi saw a man sober in action who would neither precipitate conflict nor shrink from conflict forced upon him. Gandhi planned to teach him more about avoidance of conflict, and counted on his sense of fair play to accept majority decisions. He accordingly tried to get Nehru to accept the Congress presidency year after year, from 1936 onwards. Nehru accepted "the crown of thorns," as Gandhi called it, in 1936 and 1937.

The thorns were real enough, and Nehru was not the only one to bear their scars. His colleagues, practical and pragmatic in viewpoint, were concerned with the coming elections under the 1935 Government of India Act. Nehru's mind was on the gathering war clouds and his vision reflected not his hopes but his worst fears. The choice before mankind seemed to him to lie only between "some form of communism and some form of fascism." Acceptance of office would, he thought, diminish revolutionary fervor and end in fascism. His efforts to convince his colleagues that if elected they should function only to obstruct the legislative process all but split the party. His colleagues, Gandhi wrote Nehru, "dreaded you because of your irritability. . . . They have chafed under your rebukes and magisterial manner and above all your arrogation of what has appeared to them your infallibility and superior knowledge . . ."[5] Gandhi held them all together, but Nehru thereafter began to reserve his frankness largely for the crowds.

[5] Gandhi to Nehru, 15 July 1936. *A Bunch of Old Letters* (London: Asia Publishing House; first British edition, 1960), p. 204.

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

Spurning office for himself, Nehru threw himself into a whirlwind campaign as Congress president, in what was for him a veritable discovery of India. The Indian masses thronged to see him—the average meeting numbered 20,000—and waited for hours for a glimpse of him along his route. In the age-old Indian way they fastened on him with shining eyes, lifted out of themselves by this contact with Greatness and Goodness in person. India became for him thousands upon thousands of shining eyes, all focused on his own. The current that flowed between them went both ways, recharging his own batteries, as he once put it. He did not prepare his speeches, nor did he pander to their prejudices. Rather, he attempted to instruct them. He learned to sensitize himself quickly to the "feel" of each new crowd and then, over the loudspeakers he carried with him, would speak in a rambling, conversational style of what was on his mind. He wondered occasionally what they made of references to Abyssinia, Spain, the Soviet Union, and America, but on the whole was able to persuade himself that communication had been effective. He, at any rate, offered himself as a symbol of a new India, and succeeded in kindling faith and hope. They, in turn, gave him a new sense of Indian unity in diversity. In the course of his tour he allowed himself brief visits to Mohenjo-Daro and the Ajanta and Ellora caves, gaining a new perspective on the sweep of Indian civilization. The size and enthusiasm of the crowds led him to believe there was a "bubbling ferment" in favor of socialism. His colleagues, although deeply impressed with his hold on both the masses and the younger intellectuals, thought otherwise. A parting of the ways appeared imminent more than once, but was prevented by Gandhi's skilled intervention and Nehru's conviction that the international situation made party unity indispensable.

In the summer of 1938, Nehru, increasingly oppressed by international developments, went to see Europe for himself. Krishna Menon, who had become his literary agent in London, met him in Marseilles and the two hastened to Spain. At Barcelona, where bombs were falling, Nehru found himself strangely at peace. One can surmise that for him peace meant absence of internal conflict, with mind and heart united as to interpretation of events and course of action. He had read the Webbs' book *(Soviet Communism: A New Civilization)* with its praise of Soviet democracy. He was also greatly disturbed by the Soviet purges. In Spain, Nehru, responsive as always to human heroism, reached the conclusion that imperialism and fascism were indeed twins, and that the valid test of democracy was active opposition to fascism.

After Spain, Nehru visited Czechoslovakia, Paris, Geneva, and London, watching with anguish of spirit the development of the Munich crisis. Europe, he was certain, was through—drained of courage and honor. Asia was now what mattered, and his prime task was to strengthen India against the rising tide of fascism. In London he was encouraged by meeting people recently arrived from China—both English and Chinese—who told him of

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

Chinese efforts to resist the influx of Japanese goods through a village cooperative movement intended to produce the wares China needed.

On Nehru's return to India (November 1938), he was appointed chairman of a Planning Committee by Subhas Chandra Bose, his successor as Congress President. The Committee was to survey the industrial situation in India as a first step in planning India's industrialization. Nehru found this work fascinating, and enlarged its scope to include a ten-year plan with the basic objective of achieving national self-sufficiency. The strength of Nehru's conviction that political independence would be illusory unless based upon economic independence can be seen in his position on international trade: trade with advanced countries would make India a victim of economic imperialism; but trade with less advanced countries would develop imperialist tendencies within India. To avoid this "whirlpool of economic imperialism," international trade was to be kept at a minimum. The planners were a mixed group who could not agree on basic social policy, but Nehru, leading them from one concrete problem to another, and "toning down" his own ideas where necessary, was able to achieve remarkable cooperation. The plan was never quite finished, however, as he was meanwhile sentenced to a long term of imprisonment and the committee would not function in his absence. In Nehru's scale of values, national planning henceforth had top priority, even as against the unity of India itself.

The year 1939 brought shock after shock to Nehru. The Congress crisis early in the year, strangely intertwined with Gandhi's Rajkot fast and its bewildering aftermath, broke up party unity and left Nehru completely isolated and subjected to criticism from all sides. Worse still, his confidence in his own qualities of leadership left him. Then came the Hitler-Stalin pact, shaking his confidence in the Soviet Union as a bastion against fascism. Were great historical movements an illusion and opportunism and nationalism the reality? Was Europe's failure to be attributed to shallowness of tradition? India and China, with their four-thousand-year-old traditions, came to seem the abode of the truly civilized values. The world's problems called for world-wide solutions, but meanwhile, if India and China could but stand together, their vast populations would secure them against any possible threat—political, economic, or even military—originating elsewhere. He rushed at once to China, hoping to reach an understanding with Chiang Kai-shek. He was still in China when recalled to India by the outbreak of war.

The British declaration making India a belligerent ruffled the feelings of the Indians, who had not been consulted. Opinion varied widely as to the course of action to be taken. In the end, Congress leaders, under Gandhi's generalship, made individual statements against the war in accordance with the Satyagraha code, and disappeared one by one behind prison walls. For Nehru, stirred by the heroism of Dunkirk and further impelled by hatred of fascism to take Britain's side—if only Indian independence would be

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

granted!—the forced inaction of jail brought relief. He was "slowly developing a measure of serenity, of poise, of strength of purpose which is impersonal," he wrote. He warded off gloom by recalling that India and China had both "shown tremendous staying power for ages past. They have done so, I believe, because of their sense of moral values."[6]

Nehru and other Congress leaders were released from jail early in December 1941. At their official meeting in January 1942, Gandhi formally designated Nehru as his "political heir," again placing his trust in Nehru's character as more important than the policy differences which divided them. Within a matter of months they were back in jail, when the failure of the "Cripps Mission" led to the "Quit India" resolution of 8 August 1942.

During this ninth and longest of his prison terms, Nehru, as always, read widely and set his thoughts in order through writing. He gave considerable thought to leadership. Puzzling features in Gandhi's leadership were clarified for him by B. H. Liddell Hart's *Strategy of Indirect Approach* (1941). The distinction made here between the prophet and the leader was illuminating to him. Prophets pursued the truth wherever it might lead, and were in the end stoned for it. The leader's function was to strike a compromise between truth and men's receptivity to it. What Gandhi had done was to confuse these functions, playing now the prophet and now the leader. Nehru did not intend to mistake his own role, which he saw as that of leader. He also heeded the further advice on leadership strategy. The normal resistance to a new idea could be diminished by an indirect approach—taking care not to lapse into untruth—presenting the idea not as radically new, but as time-honored practice being revived or modernized. No deception was involved, only care in tracing the connection—since 'there is nothing new under the sun.'[7] This strategy was to characterize Nehru's efforts to convert India to socialism. This distinction between the prophet and the leader—who as mediator would forfeit success if too far in advance of his followers—was not only to govern his actions but to recur time and time again in his future comment on his role as Prime Minister.

When at war's end Nehru emerged from jail, to take part in the negotiations which led to Indian independence, he was 55 years old, but had by no means exhausted his capacity for growth. Awareness that he was still growing gave him buoyancy until 1961, when his remarkable physique began to fail him. Yet, during those earlier prison years, he had accumulated a "storehouse of thought" on which to draw. It is not possible here to follow his leadership during the years of power, but it is my contention that his domestic and foreign policies developed in accordance with the basic view of India and of world trends which had evolved as shown above.

Here then was a man with extraordinary self-awareness, who made full

[6] Letter of 28 October 1941. Krishna Nehru Hutheesing, *Nehru's Letters to His Sister* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 83–84.

[7] See Nehru's *Discovery of India* (New York: John Day, 1946), pp. 455–56.

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

www.historymarg.com

and conscious use of his assets of personality and background and who also was concerned with how far he, as leader, could advance beyond his followers. To some observers, this quality of leadership appeared indecisive, but his goal never wavered and his sense of timing was, on the whole, sound. His life was dedicated to the Indian masses, in the effort to bring them, as humanely as possible, into a position in the modern world—not as a poverty-stricken replica of western nations—but as a nation to be looked up to, in consonance with India's glorious past.

MARGARET W. FISHER is the Director of the Indian Press Digests Project and Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley.

This content downloaded from 103.74.138.21 on Wed, 24 Sep 2025 10:43:47 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms